2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

mal segment of one mother and her children within the property group. Each property group usually had a separate garden name in addition to its lineage name.

Residence Among retainer Nayars of this area a property group usually owned only one homestead and was simultaneously a dwelling group. Occasionally among retainers, however, and more commonly among chiefs and village headmen, a property group which increased in size might build two or more homesteads on its lands. If the houses were adjacent they were usually occupied indiscriminately by members and cooking was done only in one. If the homesteads were some distance apart each might be occupied by a minimal segment of the group. The kāranavan would manage the resources of the whole group but would allocate provisions separately to each household. Separate cooking would be carried on.

Spouses lived separately in their natal units, with the husband visiting the wife. We shall call this type of residence *duolocal*.

A traditional homestead of retainer or village headman's rank centered about a large main building with two stories, separate staircases for men and women, and, in the middle of the building, a small courtyard open to the sky. The house faced east, and was fronted by a spacious veranda, used normally by men of the group and their male visitors. Within, a passage led to the central courtyard, round which rooms opened off on three sides. They included an ancestor shrine; several storerooms containing clothing in boxes, metal vessels, jewelry, weapons, and paddy (unhusked rice) in large wooden chests; one or more rooms for everyday use, each with sleeping mats, a bench, wooden stools and chests, and a rope to hang clothes; and a small room occupied by women during their delivery and menstrual secluSions. A roofed cloister with pillars ran between the open courtyard and the rooms. Beyond the courtyard to the west was a long, narrow dining hall with a large kitchen behind it. Behind this lay the back veranda, normally used only by women and children. Upstairs might be four or five bedrooms in which women received their husbands. Men born into the group seldom entered these upstairs rooms and were forbidden to use the women's staircase.

Outside the house in the outer courtyard a separate building served as a granary for paddy. The upstairs of this building was often set aside for the kāranavan's use. Here he slept, was served with food by women of the house, entertained co-villagers, and kept records of the group's economic transactions. If the group was large a second separate building was often reserved to junior men for reading, en-

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
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to the kāranavan. Even in relation to small children they tended to seek the backing of a brother to maintain discipline in the home. Old women who had passed the menopause had the greatest authority. They could move freely about the village, travel alone on pilgrimages, and wield influence over their younger brothers and sons. But even old women in some contexts found themselves united with their juniors as a group of legal minors under the command of a male authority.

Under these circumstances the mutual behavior of women was intimate and informal. Their joint tasks, carried out in the confined space of the kitchen, encouraged this intimacy. Further, as natal kinswomen they were habituated to each other from birth. Unlike a woman and her daughters-in-law in a patrilineal household, their group membership was unitary and they experienced a continuity in major roles and loyalties from birth to death.

If she were competent, the oldest woman of the household delegated its tasks, allowing flexibility for seasonal variation and unusual occurrences. Generally, girls who had not reached puberty ran errands between houses, did small outdoor tasks, and played with their younger siblings. The younger married women shared the heavy work of pounding paddy, milking cows, cleaning dishes, and most of the cooking. Old women had pride of place in the kitchen and living room. They supervised cookery, occupied the best seats, and controlled their juniors' consumption of betel leaves, areca nuts, and tobacco from the family box. Elderly mothers took pride in serving their children and grandchildren with food on birthdays. In a large house young married women had considerable leisure and privileges. Through the day they took turns visiting the village bathing pool in couples, an event which gave opportunity for gossip and allowed them to be seen by (although not to converse with) the men of neighboring groups. Old women proudly distributed the taravād's jointly owned jewelry among the young and marriageable women, helped them to apply cosmetics and to dress their hair, and obtained a vicarious satisfaction from their marital conquests. For a few years —until she had several children—a young woman's life was gay and not overburdened with work. Women of childbearing age also had periods of respite from the kitchen. They were secluded in an inner room for three days during menstruation and did no household tasks for ninety days after a birth. In these conditions the division of labor was not strict and the segments descended from women were not segregated in their functions. Women wielded most control over their

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Raman Menon, however, records a legend of a mother's brother who deliberately betrayed a nephew, whom he hated, to the vengeance of a lineage currently feuding with his own.[6] The nephew was to have been killed by his enemies on the following day. But in the night his mother prayed for the return of her son's elder brother who was absent in a distant land. The lineage ghosts miraculously brought home the brother in time to save his junior's life. It must be remembered, moreover, that the belief that the deceased himself would become a lineage ghost capable of wreaking vengeance probably formed a sanction against intralineage murder.

Women are excluded from the ancestral shrine during their pollutions and may not enter it on the day of propitiations. The former prohibition is related to the whole concept of bad sacredness associated with emissions of the body, which prevents women from touching or eating with others or entering any sacred place during their pollutions. That women should be totally excluded from the shrine on days of propitiation seems also to relate to the general position of women in the society. As in most of the higher Hindu castes, women traditionally played a very minor role in economic production, for the work of production was done by the lower castes. A few women were scholars, and a few were even trained in arms, but the Nāyars' occupation as soldiers in general tended to exclude women from work outside the home. The bearing of children was by far the chief value of women. Correspondingly, women were subordinates in the legal sphere. They were throughout life under the legal guardianship of men, might not take part in public deliberations, and might not act as witnesses in the village court. The legal subordination of women may have been partly connected with their comparative lack of value in economic production, and perhaps partly, with the great moral authority they derived from childbearing—for female procreation was very highly valued and male envy of these functions was overt. The cult of lineage ghosts supports the correct operation of male legal authority within the *taravād*. The exclusion of women from participation in it, and their exclusion from the shrine on days when their procreative functions were most apparent, perhaps expresses in a formal manner the notion that the power which women derived from these functions was polar and even antipathetic to the legal and economic power of men.

Although the lineage ghosts had only subsidiary judicial functions, their cult served in several ways indirectly to maintain right relationships within the *taravād*. First, a *kāranavan* who respected and correctly propitiated his own forebears provided a role model of piety for his juniors in their relations with living elders. Second, the ghosts, as we have seen, provided some sanctions against a *kāranavan's* ill treatment of his wards. Levy,[7] in connection with the Chinese ancestor cult, has pointed out the importance of having supernatural agents to whom a human authority owes deference, in social units where the authority is not chosen by his subordinates and cannot easily be manipulated or removed by them. For the authority's good behavior toward his subordinates then becomes a part of his sanctioned duty toward his own supernatural authorities. In the Chinese cult, which in this respect resembles the Brahman, the head of a family must care for his patrilineal descendants because it is part of his duty to the ancestors to provide happy and prosperous offspring. For these, by their own later ancestral offerings, will save the forebears' spirits, and his own, from suffering in the life after death. In the Nāyar case, the *kāranavan* must keep his *taravād* in good order because if he does not do so the lineage ghosts may inflict suffering on all, including himself.

5:Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

hoods are placed in the shrine, and no insect or rat or other animal is killed in the consecrated spot. Even broken bits of snake images are worshipped and they are set up in a row. No image or snake-stone is permitted to fall down, as that is considered to be inauspicious. On the inner surface of the hood of the snake is carved a seated female figure.

These sacred snakes are supposed to be different from the ordinary serpents. They are given the status of benign family deities and are presumed to possess strange powers and the attribute of gods. They are revered and they deign to live only under ceremonially pure conditions and surroundings, accepting only vegetarian offerings and abhorring animal sacrifice. In contrast mention may be made of the Thlen of the Khasis which demands human blood as offering. In the event however of their abode being polluted, e. g., by a menstruating woman, the serpents are angered, and unless propitiated may cause disease or harm to the offender. The sacred serpent called *sarpam* is supposed to be small, about 6 to 18 inches in length and is golden in colour. It is highly poisonous but ordinarily does not do any harm. If properly propitiated it guards the family and brings good luck and prosperity; but if neglected, insulted, or otherwise uncared for, it causes skin disease, leprosy or loss of sight. Such a punishment is visited on the offender or on his near relatives. As a consequence certain taboos are attached to the shrines and no menstruating or pregnant woman may come within six yards of the shrine, nor should anyone enter it without taking a bath.

The actual worship or *puja* is conducted either once or twice a year. The priest cooks rice in milk and adds pieces of ripe plantain to it, with a few flowering heads of the sacred *tulsi* plant dropped in towards the end. The offering is cooked on a special oven near the *sarpa kavu* in a bell-metal vessel. Thereafter, the priest pours some water over the snake idols to ceremonially bathe them and places a bunch of areca-nut palm in efflorescence on the head of the image in a diagonal fashion. The idol is then anointed with turmeric powder and basil leaves and flower petals are

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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has been explained to me in this way. The Nâyar woman observes pollution for three days during menstruation. While in her period she may not eat or drink with any other member of the Taravâd, and at the end of it, that is on the fourth day, she must be purified. Purification is known as "mâttu" (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the *Mannan* or Vannan caste (whose *métier* it is to wash for the Nâyars and Nambûtiris), but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tîyan caste, giving her, after her bath, *one of her own* clean cloths to wear (which is called mattu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child birth, or menstruation *must* be removed by "mâttu." There is no avoiding it.* Until it is done, and it *must* be done on the fourth day, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences. How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks vengeance on a Taravâd by preventing the right person giving "mâttu" to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal inflict deeper injury. Now the Nâyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of "mâttu." My informant here tells me that the Vannan caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nâyar women cannot go where these are not to be found; and that "mâttu" must be done by one of that caste. But this is not the rule. I know from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranâd for instance, where the Nâyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tîyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction has other roots than those involved in "mâttu." It does not account for the superstition against crossing water which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. As bearing on this point I may mention that the Nâyar women living to the east of Calicut cannot cross the river-backwater and come into the town.

The Zamorin is the over-lord of the Akattu Châma clan, and with the decline of his power and influence, it may be that the women of it have latterly taken more liberty than was formerly possible.

* More will be said on this point when we come to describe the Tîyans.

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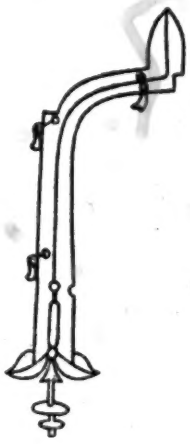
411 called nândakam smeared with white (probably sandal-wood) paste. The shape of this sword is given in the illustration. To its edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells, so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle.

796
564



But just before the procession begins there is something for the Tîyans to do. Four men of this caste, having with them Pûkkalasams (flower-kalasams) and five having with them Jannakalasams (?) run along the west, north, and east, sides of the temple (outside the enclosure) shouting and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than anything else. The kalasams contain arrack which is presently given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies. Members of certain families [273] [465] only are allowed to perform in this business, and for what they do each man receives five edangâlis of rice from the temple and a small piece of the flesh of the goat to be [264] sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day [834] during the festival; they do no work, remaining quietly at home unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot [841] cohabit with women; and they cannot see a women in menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tîyans join more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the arrack in them. These men are always under vow. [782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit they have already received from the goddess—cure from sickness as a rule. To the west of the temple is a circular 796 pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in 564 it—and this pit all the Tîyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north, three times, holding on the head a pewter plate on which are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each women completes her third round, she stands for a moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the contents of the plate into the

Tiyyar

[North Malabar]

Polyandry is forbidden

polygyny more common than among Nayars. Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage is encouraged, the mother's brother's son being the rightful husband of a girl. Divorce, however, appears to be much more common than among Nayars and the domestic group less stable, especially in poor families.

For the post-puberty marriage ceremony the bridegroom comes with his parents and elders to the house of the bride. This contrasts with Nayar marriage, where the youth is accompanied by age-mates, the father and maternal uncles being prohibited from attending. This difference reflects the fact that despite virilocal residence and the comparative infrequency of divorce, North Malabar Nayar marriage is theoretically, as in the south, a contract between individuals as sexual partners and not between lineages. Moreover, the absence of the maternal uncles reflects the sexual jealousy between proximal generations in a Nayar lineage. Among Tiyyars, marriage is primarily a contract between families, a domestic arrangement for procuring food and bringing up children, as well as a sexual tie. The bridegroom's father and *kāranavan* jointly give gold to the goldsmith who makes earrings for the bride and places them in the tops of her ears. These rings are the mark of a married woman and are removed at divorce or death.

The feast at the bride's house is paid for jointly by the two parties. After it is over, the bridegroom's *kāranavan* pays a bride-price in *panams* (old-fashioned Malayali coins) to the *kāranavan* of the bride. This sum is called *kānam*, the word used for the sum paid by a Nayar or Tiyyar tenant to his landlord at the start of a period of tenure, nowadays fixed at twelve years. The interest on the *kānam* sum is then set off against the annual rent, and returned to the tenant if the property is returned at the end of the stipulated period. The Tiyyar marriage is thus, as Aiyappan (1944, p. 91) says, 'in theory a temporary depositing of a girl by her natural guardian amidst another group from whom a security is received and also an undertaking to take care of her'. The bride's party in return pay a dowry of jewellery and vessels. The bridegroom presents one loin-cloth to the bride and another to her mother. The couple are blessed by elders and depart to the bridegroom's house.

The Tiyyar marriage, therefore, is better defined legally than the Nayar. The *kānam* sum (which is of nominal value, in Kottayam fixed at 13½ *panams* or 3 to 5 rupees[1] and paid in the old coins long after their use as currency died out) is, it seems, a symbolic purchase of the husband's *ius in uxorem*. While this persists, he must maintain his wife. Should he lose it by the wife's adultery, his *kānam* sum is returned and his wife goes home with her dowry. In theory, he does not acquire *ius in genitricem* in his wife: this, as in all matrilineal societies, remains with her natal kin. Similarly, the father need not by law maintain his children, though he often does so in fact. These may at any time be returned to their *kāranavan*.

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. Since the Tiyyar *tāli*-rite died out about twenty years ago, it has been better described in previous literature than by my own informants. I therefore summarize Anantha Krishna Iyer's (1909–12, I, p. 288), Thurston & Rangachari's (1909, VII, pp. 77–9) and Aiyappan's (1944, pp. 159–62) accounts, and then add that of my informants.

The rite must be performed before puberty, on pain of disgrace to the girl's family, and, in ancient times, excommunication from caste. The day was fixed by the astrologer and the ceremony held in the girl's matrilineal ancestral house. The girl was taken to the middle room of the house and secluded for three days as if she had menstruated. Like a menstruous woman, she must abstain from meat and condiments and must not see a tree, a plant, a man, a crow, a dog, or a cat. On the fourth day she bathed in the local pool. At the pool, her brother planted an arrow with its point up, to drive away evil spirits. After bathing, the girl cut a

[1] Thurston & Rangachari report that the north Malabar *kānam* sum is 41 *panams*; Aiyappan, however, places it between 8 and 20 *panams*. In Kottayam the bridegroom's mother's brother gives 13½ *panams* to the bride's mother's brother and 2 *panams* to her mother's brother's wife.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
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and coconut symbolize female fertility. The couple's act of eating from the same leaf, and the Tiyyar girl's act of mixing sweet porridge, grinding with a grindstone, and 'cohabiting' with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom, may be interpreted as symbolic intercourse.

In the North Malabar Tiyyar rite the barber as well as the *tāli*-tier appears as a vicarious bridegroom. Before the *tāli* is tied, he uncovers the girl's face and head, an act performed by the bridegroom in many Hindu marriage-rites. He then places coins in her hair and pours on to them coconut water from an *aswatha* leaf. Since this leaf represents Vishnu and male creative power, I regard the pouring of coconut water from it on to the coins as symbolic intercourse.[1] The barber is paid in cloths for his services, much as the ritual bridegroom is paid in South Malabar Nayar and Tiyyar rites.

In all the groups, then, it was necessary for a girl to be, at least symbolically, deflowered before puberty. Next, the girl is secluded for three days before the rite under circumstances almost identical with those of the first menstruation. Like a woman during that period, she might not eat meat, salt, tamarind or chillies, nor see a man, tree, plant, crow, dog, or cat. Among the Tiyyars, Thurston (1906, p. 3) reports that in some areas she kept an arrow, said to be the arrow of Kama Devan, always beside her.

This seclusion with an arrow looks like symbolic cohabitation with a token bridegroom, as in the South Malabar Tiyyar girl's seclusion with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom *after* the *tāli*-rite. At the same time, it must be noted that among Tiyyars, Nayars, and also some Tamil castes, a woman keeps beside her a knife during menstruation; it is said to ward off attack by evil spirits.

These observances of the first menstruation and of the mock-menstruation before the *tāli*-rite must be seen in the context of a set of beliefs concerning menstruation in general. It is believed that a Nayar or Tiyyar woman is in a dangerous as well as a polluting condition during menstruation, especially the first. It is feared that, if she disregards any of the prohibitions, she may be raped by evil spirits, appearing as hairy animals. This circumstance results in hysterical, dissociated behaviour or in dangerous loss of blood. It is said also that if a man foolhardily copulated with a menstruous woman, he would become impotent. Similarly, if the woman were to urinate at the base of a tree, or walk in a paddy-field, the tree or the paddy would wither and die. If she were to approach a temple or the ancester-shrine of her *tarawād*, the temple-god or the ancestors might inflict her with excessive bleeding, or strike her dead.

To interpret these beliefs, I make use of Ernest Jones's (1931, pp. 44, 54, 73) theory that the evil spirits of myths, superstitious beliefs, and daytime phantasies arise from the same unconscious source as those of nightmares, and that the evil shapes seen in nightmares invariably issue from repressed incestuous desires, the fear engendered by which causes the desired object to appear in terrible form. The hairy animal-spirits who may rape a menstruous woman are thus male parent-imagines. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact of the fear of attack from a god or dead *kāranavan*'s spirit (patrilineal among South Malabar Tiyyars, matrilineal in the other groups), should the menstruous woman approach them. Since it causes dangerous bleeding, the attack by a god or an ancestor is evidently sexual, like that by the hairy animals: all therefore probably indicate an unconscious dread of being raped by a male parental figure with, underlying this, a repressed incestuous desire.[2]

The fact that evil spirits attack when the woman breaks the prohibitions (e.g. on seeing a man, or some other animal or plant phallic symbol) may reflect fear of the unconscious

[1] For the sexual significance of anointing in general see Ernest Jones (1931, pp. 307–8). Alternatively we may regard the barber's act as that of a paternal figure who, by anointing her, confers fertility on the girl.

[2] Melanie Klein (1932, p. 307) notes that the European girl at puberty frequently exhibits fear that her father may attack and copulate with her in a sadistic way, either because she has had sadistic masturbation phantasies about her mother or because he wishes to get back the penis she has taken from him.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
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and the five products of the cow. This ends their pollution and also the prohibition on using oil for cooking and bathing during the pollution period. The ability of a low caste man to purify a family from pollution (when in other contexts he is less pure than they) is an anomalous situation common in South India which has not so far been explained in sociological terms. It is paralleled by the fact that the washerman's purifying cloth is used by a woman to bathe in after menstruation; the washerman must also supply a similar purifying cloth for Nayars and Tiyyars to stand on when they are being purified by cow's excrements from the pollution of death. In some contexts, the Nayars recognize this anomaly, and thus employ two priests for death-rites, the lower caste funeral priest for ties during pollution, and the Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris ranking above Nayars, to purify them and instruct them in final rites to the spirit. The Elayad also consecrates the South Malabar Nayar *tāli*, so that the Tiyyar barber may be compared to him as a functionary in the *tāli*-rite. In addition, the barber acts as a priest in Tiyyar family shrines in North Malabar dedicated to Bhagavadi and to ancestors. Finally, as barber, he performs the ceremonial hair-cutting of a Tiyyar boy at the age of three, and the ceremonial shaving of a Tiyyar man at a funeral and before other ritual occasions, including the *tāli*-rite of his nieces and daughters.

I suggest that the barber, both as a polluting 'younger' person and as a holy one who can conduct Tiyyar ceremonies and purify them from pollution, is both a son-surrogate and a father-surrogate for Tiyyars. His association in death-ceremonies with the spirits of Tiyyar leads me to suspect that he is identified with the ancestors, who, in psycho-analytic terms, collectively represent the father.[1] In this role the barber would resemble the washerman, his 'twin' in the caste-hierarchy, who in masked dances impersonates the dead ancestors and local heroes of both Nayars and Tiyyars in North Malabar and of Tiyyars in the south, and, while possessed by them, declares their will to the *tarawād*. We have seen that the washerman, like the barber, may be viewed as a proxy bridegroom to the Tiyyar or Nayar girl in the puberty rites where he instructs her to perform offerings to the lamp as a phallic symbol and sings lewd songs to enhance her fertility.

The barber is also, however (because of hypergamous Tiyyar-barber marriages), a son-figure, and in general caste-terms a junior to the Tiyyar. In this role his ability to act as a kind of bridegroom at the *tāli*-rite reminds us of the practice of South Malabar Tiyyars, who select a small boy of an affine *tarawād* as proxy bridegroom in the rite. Until about the age of eight, a boy may touch mature women of his own or another lineage. The fact that the small bridegroom is carried into the marriage-shed in the arms of his maternal uncle renders harmless his 'marriage' to the bride: he is a child, brought by a father-figure who adjures him to perform the rite. This fits my hypothesis that the immature girl in these castes is unconsciously likened to the mother: only a father-figure, an infant, or some generalized 'polluted' yet 'holy' figure may approach her with impunity.

My hypothesis that the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother as a forbidden sexual object rests partly on the fact that in these rites the girl is brought into association with Bhagavadi, the mother-goddess of Nayars and Tiyyars. A branch of her milk-tree is set

[1] A psychoanalyst might probably see in the barber's other roles that of father-surrogate. Hair-cutting and shaving are in many parts of the world likened to castration or to a weakening of sexual power. Among Tiyyars they are ceremonially performed for boys at the age of three to five, and for men immediately after a death in the family. The ceremonial head-shaving of a boy (like the ceremonial ear-boring by the goldsmith, another low-caste functionary) is believed to reduce his *sakthi* (strength) and render him immune to the evil eye of the envious or to attacks from ghosts. It is possible to argue that the rite is a symbolic castration, performed to protect the child, in phantasy, from the danger of real castration at the hands of his jealous father, whose form is projected in the evil eye and in ghosts who attack small children. After a death, the ritual shaving of the heir is part of a complex of rites to ward off the vengeful anger of the spirit. It goes along with abstention from intercourse and from sexually stimulating foods, and the carrying of a knife (phallic talisman?) by the heir to ward off the murderous attack of the spirit. I associate head-shaving, like sexual abstinence, with symbolic castration of the mourner to avert the castrating and murderous wrath of the deceased whom, in his unconscious mind, the mourner himself has murdered.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
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vehicles, indicate that she is a phallic mother, the 'mother with a penis' who is a common phantasy for European children too. It is well known that in the unconscious minds of Europeans, the phallic mother usually and perhaps always represents the mother armed with the father's penis, which she has acquired in an act of sadistic intercourse. The infant's fear of approaching her sexually thus becomes a fear of being attacked and castrated by the angry penis of the father which the mother has taken as her weapon. In the myths the demon may in each case be interpreted as a son-figure, for in each case he acquires power as a devotee who does penance to Siva, the father-god in the Tamil and Malayalam countries. The son attacks the mother sexually, but she is pre-armed by Siva or by the other gods with their weapons. In some myths she uses their phallic symbol, the sword (a common castration symbol), to behead the demon-son. In the myth of Vanasuran she pierces the demon with the sword and then kills him with her disc. I associate being killed by means of this circular weapon with being castrated by the vagina in intercourse, and the disappearance into the hole with annihilation by being swallowed up in the mother's body, a phantasy which we see too in the fear of being eaten by the mother. Behind this fear may lie an unconscious desire to return to the womb. This interpretation is likely because bathing in the *chakkra-theertham* at Cape Comerin is a means of becoming pure from sin, and purificatory bathing, a common rebirth symbol.

I suggest that the fear of deflowering a virgin issues from this association of her with the phallic mother since, like the mother, she is still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen and defended by their sexual organs, which (in phantasy) they or she may use to castrate or attack an aggressor. We saw how, in the Nayar rite, the lineage men in fact attack the bridegroom with 'phallic' missiles (plantain fruits) and how the ritual play with swords suggests a sexual attack and defence.

A further reason why the *tâli* must be tied before puberty may be that the menstruous woman is particularly closely associated with the mother, menstrual blood (see the blood-dripping mouth of Bhadrakali) recalling the infantile phantasy of parental intercourse as a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds, but castrates him and acquires the penis. A virgin who had menstruated but was still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen would thus be too terrifying a creature to deflower. This may be why a woman who matured before the *tâli* was tied (i.e. before she was symbolically deflowered and removed from the sexual protection of her kinsmen) was considered irrevocably polluting, a creature to be driven from caste and with whom it would be madness to cohabit. It was therefore desirable to make her attain puberty fictitiously in advance by the mock menstruation ceremony, and then actually or symbolically to deflower her before she was in fact mature. Even so, the bridegroom must be a polluted low caste person, whose ritual purity could not be further endangered, or a father-figure to the society at large, or a small boy whose act appears innocuous, or a woman on behalf of her son.

My association of the menstruous woman with the phallic, blood-dripping divine mother rests on the fact that, like the goddess, she is 'sacred' and may not be approached; that she is armed with a knife to ward off evil spirits; and that she is credited with the power to make men impotent (castrate them) if they foolhardily copulate with her. It must be noticed too that the obscene songs sung by the washermen at a Nayar or a Tiyyar girl's first menstruation are sung on another occasion, namely the annual Bharani festival to the Bhadrakali of Kodungalur temple in Cochin. In this festival the temple, normally closed to the 'polluting' castes below Nayars, is for seven days flung open to them and deliberately polluted. On the day previous to Bharani, Nayar and low caste pilgrims, drunk with toddy, armed with long staffs, and carrying live cocks, flock in thousands to the temple from all parts of Malabar. On the road they sing obscene songs to the goddess and revile in filthy language women whom they meet. [533]

793 776 182 831 588 841 182 831 841 793 831 182 796 831 78

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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Nayar

773 778 825 [776] thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia, among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

778 771 825 [782] [753] [776]

793 795 778 825 [782] The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel. The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy. The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes

[564] [841] [783] [787] 771 778 825 [841] [782] [532]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

105 563 1795 There is a small community of Jews in Cochin, divided into White, Brown, and Black, the last named being the most numerous. Other Kerala residents are foreigners such as Canarese, Tamils, Arabs, and Europeans.

105 564 783 Untouchability has been made a penal offence by the present Indian Constitution and there is undoubtedly a tendency among the more enlightened in the country to combat its evils and attempt to eradicate it from modern Hindu society. On the other hand, the religious minded (and there are many) maintain that since the Constitution is a secular one and allows full freedom of religious belief and practice, the legislator cannot interfere in questions of caste and untouchability, as these have to do with the religious law and structure of India. The fact is that, today, untouchability is not what it was, but it cannot be said either that it has been done away with altogether. A visitor to Kerala is certainly immediately made aware of this, as many traditional views on what constitutes intercaste pollution and what does not are still very much in evidence. Thus, although a member of the artisan caste, a 784 264 Kammalan, perhaps no longer pollutes those above him in the hierarchy, atmospherically, at twenty four feet as he used to do, it is nevertheless unthinkable that he should sit down to a meal of cooked rice with a 463 484 1784 Nambudri, or even for that matter with a Nayar. The aboriginal Nayadis who still live off begging and hunting may possibly "come into town" now and not have to keep off the roads for fear of polluting other castes merely by being seen within a distance of seventy four feet, but they are not for that admitted to a would-be reformed Indian community in which no distinctions of caste, creed and colour are made any longer; in fact, they themselves, probably out of some sort of perverse attachment to their powers of polluting, refuse to be rehabilitated – as has been attempted by the former government of Travancore – and prefer to carry on with their traditional way of life.

It can thus be safely said that pollution of the higher castes by the lower is very much believed in and guarded against, even in Kerala 841 846 today. Menstruating women, and also those who have given birth, are still considered to be unclean for a period, varying with the people to whom they belong. And the various kin groups, of which every indivi- 614 846 1765 idual is a member among the Hindus of Kerala, will equally be considered unclean and polluting for a certain amount of days – diminishing in number in inverse proportion to the height of the caste – after a birth or a death has taken place.

000 Respect towards a superior, towards a god, towards a respected par-

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

*595 his presence there to the others. I enquired from my informant, Panju, if this were still done. As in the case of other polyandrous people whom I had questioned on this point, he laughed heartily at the idea and said that he had never heard of anything like it. According to him, it was usually the woman who decided with whom she should spend the night; the others then stayed out on the verandah or in another room. Even in the older generation, he did not think that anything remotely resembling the leaving of a knife at the door was ever done.

When I discussed the point with one of the interpreters, he told me that in some polyandrous households that he knew, the husband who did not wish to be disturbed when he was with the common wife would leave his clothes lying about in the neighbouring room or on the verandah as a signal to his brothers. An old Thandan woman confirmed this one day when I met her at Shoranur, where she had come to be interviewed by my wife. She added, however, that there was no fast and firm system and that such things varied "from village to village". It could also be said, I suppose, that they differ from household to household. On the whole, however, there does not seem to be a more developed system of signalling in Kerala than anywhere else.

*595 At home, the obligations of the men consist in making a living for the family in whatever profession or occupation they are engaged. Panju and Narayana cultivate the fields and gather the harvest, often assisting their elder brothers or being helped by them. The wife takes on the household chores, such as cooking and keeping the house clean; she also looks after the children as long as she is suckling them, which may be, in common with other Asiatic mothers, for a very long period – two or three years. The fathers will start attending to their offspring when the woman is isolated during the polluting period of her menses, and thus gradually come to know the children better and to influence their upbringing. Dominance at home is determined solely by the personality of one of the fathers, and does not follow seniority in age. It is however always a man who is the head of the household, the woman being treated here, as elsewhere among other polyandrous peoples, as the property of the husbands.

Does the woman enjoy living in polyandry and what are her conjugal obligations towards her mates? I put this question to Panju as I had to others whom I had interviewed in other communities. He was of the opinion that it all depends on how she feels towards the men. Devaki and Kuniyama, while being good wives to Mayadi in the first case, and to Raman in the second, had been bad ones to the younger men of the

afterwards to remove pollution. The children in the marumakkatayam family belong, of course, to their mother's family, clan, and caste. They are Nāyars, not Nambūtiris. The Nāyars of North Malabar are held to be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those of South Malabar, which is divided from the north by the river Korapuzha, seven miles north of Calicut, so that a woman of North Malabar would not unite herself to a man of her own clan name of South Malabar. A Nāyar woman of North Malabar cannot pass northward beyond the frontier; she cannot pass the hills to the eastward; and she cannot cross the Korapuzha to the south. It is tabu. The women of South Malabar are similarly confined by custom, breach of which involves forfeiture of caste. To this rule there is an exception, and of late years the world has come in touch with the Malayāli, who nowadays goes to the University, studies medicine and law in the Presidency town (Madras), or even in far off England. Women of the relatively inferior Akattu Charna clan are not under quite the same restrictions as regards residence as are those of most of the other clans; so, in these days of free communications, when Malayālis travel, and frequently reside far from their own country, they often prefer to select wives from this Akattu Charna clan. But the old order changeth everywhere, and nowadays Malayālis who are in the Government service, and obliged to reside far away from Malabar, and a few who have taken up their abode in the Presidency town, have wrenched themselves free of the bonds of custom, and taken with them their wives who are of clans other than the Akattu Charna. The interdiction to travel, and the possible exception to it in the case of Akattu Charna women, has been explained to me in this way. The Nāyar woman observes pollution for three days during

13;Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
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841 menstruation. While in her period, she may not eat or
783 drink with any other member of the taravād, and on the
[613] fourth day she must be purified. Purification is known as māttu (change), and it is effected by the washerwoman, who, in some parts of South Malabar, is of the Mannān or Vannān caste, whose *métier* is to wash for the Nāyars and Nambūtiris, but who is, as a rule, the washerwoman of the Tīyan caste, giving her, after her bath, one of her own cloths to wear (māttu, change of raiment) instead of the soiled cloth, which she takes away to wash. Pollution, which may come through a death in the family, through child-birth, or menstruation, must be removed by māttu. Until it is done, the woman is out of caste. It must be done in the right way at the right moment, under pain of the most unpleasant social consequences.
[689] How that the influential rural local magnate wreaks
[613] vengeance on a taravād by preventing the right person giving māttu to the women is well known in Malabar. He could not, with all the sections of the Penal Code at his disposal, inflict greater injury. Now the Nāyar woman is said to feel compelled to remain in Malabar, or within her own part of it, in order to be within reach of māttu. My informant tells me that, the Vannān caste being peculiar to Malabar, the Nāyar women cannot go where these are not to be found, and that māttu must be done by one of that caste. But I know, from my own observation in the most truly conservative localities, in Kurumbranād for example, where the Nāyar has a relative superiority, that the washerman is as a rule a Tīyan; and I cannot but think that the interdiction
123 has other roots than those involved in māttu. It does
784 not account for the superstition against crossing water,
562 which has its counterparts elsewhere in the world. The origin of the interdiction to cross the river southwards

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4,'5 (no date) 1909
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principal oil-man ; and it is the duty of this caste to present the Kurumbranād Rāja with oil on the occasion of his formal installation. The fifth group consists of the three kulams, Mannangazhi, Paramchela, and Pallikara Nāyars, all observing fifteen days' pollution. A member of the first-named class has to place an āmanapalaga (the traditional seat of Nambūdiris and other high castes) for the Kurumbranād Rāja to sit on at the time of his installation, while a member of the second has to present him with a cloth on the same occasion. The sixth group consists of four kiriyams named Patam, Tulu, Manan, and Ottu respectively, and has the collective name of Rāvāri. The seventh group consists of six kulams, Kandōn, Kannankōdan, Kotta, Karumba, Kundakollavan, and Panakādan Nāyars. All observe fifteen days' pollution, and the women of these six kulams have certain duties to perform in connection with the purification of women of the Vengalat, Paṭṭillat, and Orakatteri kulams. Besides these seven groups, there are a few other classes without internal sub-divisions. One such class is known as Pāppini Nāyar. A woman of this class takes the part of the Brāhmini woman (Nambissan) at the tāli-kettu kalyanam of girls belonging to the kulams included in the third group. Another class called Pālattavan takes the place of the Attikurissi Nāyar at the funeral ceremonies of the same three kulams."

In illustration of the custom of polyandry among the Nāyars of Malabar in by-gone days, the following extracts may be quoted. "On the continent of India," it is recorded in Ellis' edition of the Kural, "polyandry is still said to be practiced in Orissa, and among particular tribes in other parts. In Malayālam, as is well known, the vision of Plato in his ideal republic is more completely

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man receives five edangālis of rice from the temple, and [465] a small piece of the flesh of the goat which is sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day during the [834] festival; they do no work, remaining quietly at home [841] unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot cohabit with women; and they cannot see a woman in menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tiyans join more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the arrack in them. These men are always under a vow. [782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit they have already received from the goddess—796 cure from sickness as a rule. To the west of the 564 temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tiyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north, three times, holding on the head a pewter plate, on which are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each woman completes her third round, she stands for a moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the [782] contents of the plate into the pit. She then goes to the western gate of the enclosure, and puts down her plate for an instant while she makes profound salaam to the 796 goddess ere going away. Now the procession starts 776 out from the temple, issuing from the northern gate, 788 and for a moment confronts a being so strange that he demands description. Of the many familiar demons of the Malayālis, the two most intimate are Kuttichchāttan and Gulikan, who are supposed to have assisted Kāli (who is scarcely the Kāli of Brāhmanism) in overcoming the Āsura, and on the occasion of this festival these